AN INVESTMENT IN GROWTH:

TRAINING NEEDS IN SASKATCHEWAN'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

Research Coordinated and Compiled by

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STEC

SASKATCHEWAN TOURISM EDUCATION COUNCIL

A Division of Tourism Saskatchewan

101 - 230 22nd ST E
Saskatoon SK S7K 0E9
Ph. (306)933-5900
Fax (306)933-6250

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Executive Summary

Background

The tourism industry is currently the single largest industrial sector in the world, making the largest contribution to the global economy in terms of both jobs and economic impact (Tourism Saskatchewan, 1996). In Saskatchewan, tourism ranks fourth among all industrial sectors, employing about 42,000 full and part time workers and generating an estimated $1.14 billion in visitor expenditures (Tourism Saskatchewan, 1998). It is also the fastest growing industrial sector in Saskatchewan's economy (Tourism Saskatchewan, 1998).

In order to sustain the level of growth in the industry, it is essential that a well-trained and competent work force be available to employers and operators. In 1990, the tourism industry of Saskatchewan, through a number of its members' associations, joined together to create the Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council (STEC), a non-profit organization established to ensure the development of the professionalism of the tourism industry (Tourism Saskatchewan, 1996). Since that time, STEC has focused on a number of strategies to improve the tourism work force, including:

- the creation of occupational standards in a variety of occupations from front line to middle management
- the development of training tools for use both in the classroom and in the workplace
- the development of certification processes whereby workers can compare their skills to the established standards and demonstrate that they are able to perform their occupations competently

STEC has developed its occupational standards, certification and training programs in partnership with other similar organizations across the country. Two significant partnerships have emerged in which STEC is a leading member. The first, the Tourism Standards Consortium - Western Canada (TSC) is a partnership of the four western provinces of Canada and more recently the two northern territories. The TSC has played a leadership role nationally in the development of occupational standards and certification, with the majority of all available standards being developed in one or more of the four western provinces (although many have now been validated across the country). Nationally, the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTHRC) has brought together the provincial tourism education councils, national tourism industry associations, large national tourism corporations (e.g. airlines, large hotel chains, etc.) and organized labor to build national policies and strategies for tourism human resource development. The CTHRC has focused on the development of training programs and materials in support of occupational standards and certification. The agendas of both of these inter-provincial partnerships are driven primarily by need identified at the provincial level.

STEC and other provincial tourism education councils were created because research into the tourism industry over the past two decades has shown that significant human resource issues plague the industry. Workers in the industry are highly transient, with some employers experiencing as much as 300% turnover each year (Ontario Ministry of Skills Development, Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation & Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities, 1990). Workers in the industry do not look at tourism occupations as "career" occupations (Industry, Science and Technology Canada, 1993), employers have difficulty attracting and retaining qualified staff and management (Industry, Science and Technology Canada, 1993), and the industry, from time to time, experiences significant labor shortages (Human Resource Development Canada & Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training, 1997). Similar findings were reported as far back as 1974, when the Alberta Ministry of Travel investigated the labor situation in the accommodation and food services sector of that province (Travel Alberta).

Although STEC has based its program development on research conducted across the country, until 1997 a significant investigation of human resource and training requirements in the tourism industry of Saskatchewan had never been conducted. In 1996, the federal government began the transfer of all responsibility for training and human resource development to the provinces. In Saskatchewan, a transitional partnership agreement was negotiated between Human Resources Development Canada and Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training to allow the province to develop the strategies and resources to successfully take over responsibility for human resource development. As a result of that agreement, the province launched training needs assessment research into five sectors of the Saskatchewan economy, one of which was tourism. The tourism sector study was completed in November of 1997 (Human Resource Development Canada & Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training).

The study was considered by many in the tourism industry to reflect the reality of the industry's training needs in only a limited way (Beckman, 1997), largely because it focused on training needs that could be met by post-secondary training institutions and neglected those needs that would better be met in the workplace or through seminars and short courses. STEC was subsequently awarded funds by the government of Saskatchewan (Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training) to conduct further and more in-depth needs assessment research into the tourism industry.

This study focuses on the traditionally recognized eight sectors of tourism (Food and Beverage Service, Accommodation, Travel Trade, Adventure Tourism and Recreation, Events and Conferences, Tourism Services, Attractions, and Transportation) and identifies the training needs arising specifically within each sector. An individual assessment for the Attractions sector has not been completed because it has been covered in both the Adventure Tourism and Recreation, and Events and Conferences assessments, as well as through a training needs assessment completed in the cultural sector, which includes extensive information on museums. The cultural assessment is available through SaskCulture Inc.

Aboriginal tourism is growing in importance and impact in the province of Saskatchewan. It was determined early in the design of the study that the needs of Aboriginal peoples deserved separate and specific attention. This area of tourism crosses many of the

sectors including accommodation, food and beverage, adventure tourism and attractions. However, many of the training requirements are culturally specific and reflective of the needs of a long marginalized population. Therefore, this study examined the needs of Aboriginal tourism separately, although Aboriginal people were surveyed or interviewed in all of the sectors.

Study Design

The study examined the traditionally recognized eight sectors along with Aboriginal tourism. Sectors were examined separately to ensure that the specific issues of each sector clearly emerged during the research process. Depending upon the size and structure of each sector, various research methods were utilized. Some of the sector studies were limited by time and, as a consequence, their results may be less representative than others. These are identified within the specific sector report.

The various studies conducted used several quantitative and qualitative research methods including:

- Focus Groups
- Interviews
- Mail surveys

Generally, qualitative methods such as focus groups and interviews were used to create relevant response options for mail surveys, although some sectors were examined using exclusively one method or the other. The table below outlines the methods utilized to examine training needs for each sector.

Sector	*Research Method*
Aboriginal Tourism	• Key Informant Interviews
Accommodation	• Focus Groups • Mail Surveys
Adventure Tourism & Recreation	• Focus Groups • Mail Surveys
Attractions	• Data collected through the cultural sector
Food and Beverage	• Focus Groups • Mail Surveys
Events and Conferences	• Focus Groups
Tourism Services	• Key Informant Interviews • Mail Surveys
Transportation	• Mail Surveys
Travel Trade	• Key Informant Interviews (validating a national study)

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were utilized because each offers significant advantages and, together, they overcome the disadvantages of the other. Qualitative data offers rich information, allowing study participants to tell their experience in their own words, but is time consuming to gather and analyze and therefore frequently under represents the constituency of interest. Quantitative data is less time consuming for participants and researchers and can be gathered in volume and be, therefore, more representative. Interpretation of quantitative data is then informed and enhanced by the qualitative sources.

Overview of Industry

The tourism industry is primarily an industry of owner-operated small business. Many of the tourism businesses in Saskatchewan are seasonal, although less so now than in the past. Frequently, the tourism industry is a first-time employer of workers. This leads to several important issues related to recruitment and retention of employees:

- There is a failure on the part of the rest of the work world to recognize the importance of this role
- Workers tend to like their work, but feel that it is not respected by others
- Entry level jobs in this industry are often referred to in some circles as "burger flipping jobs" or "McJobs"
- The low esteem in which the work is held, by both society and employers, results in increased turnover and frequently lower commitment to training and retaining employees

Training is not generally a high priority. Indeed, we found that on occasion, even a reasonable level of job orientation was unlikely. Resources (both time and money) were most frequently noted as barriers. There were some definite exceptions to this rule, but, on the whole, there was a pattern of neglect towards human resource issues in general. If the tourism industry is to continue to grow, it must change this approach to human resource development. Tourism-related employment in Saskatchewan is projected to grow at a rate of 3.0%, compared to a projected growth rate of 1.3% in all industrial sectors (CTHRC, 1997). The competition for qualified, skilled employees is increasing and, at the current level of training investment, we will not be able to sustain the projected growth.

While many consider their work in the tourism industry as careers, it is essential to recognize that the tourism industry is also training employees for the rest of the workforce. Not only are essential workplace skills provided through experience in the tourism industry, many use work in the industry to finance post-secondary education in support of further career advancement. Two skills emerge as key to success in the tourism industry that, once learned, can be transferred to occupations anywhere:

- A strong foundation in customer service and interpersonal skills
- An understanding of what the expectations are of a workplace (punctuality, effectiveness, productivity, etc.)

The importance of these skills to future success in the world of work is undeniable, and it must be recognized that the tourism industry is involved in the provision of these skills to most other industrial sectors.

Finally, a caveat on the results of this study is offered. Data was gathered from employers and employees in the sector. The accuracy of the information provided by them is limited to the extent that these individuals were knowledgeable of market and consumer trends. We suggest that the study accurately portrays the training requirements to serve the tourism consumers of today. However, some sectors are undergoing significant changes in terms of consumer demand (e.g. retail travel trade as a consequence of technology; adventure tourism as a consequence of market trends). It is possible that the data reported here understate the training needs spurred by the profound changes anticipated in these sectors. This type of limitation is inherent to the kind of research conducted, but results and recommendations must be considered in that light.

STUDY RESULTS

General Themes

A number of general themes emerged across all sectors of Saskatchewan's tourism industry – skills that are essential for success no matter where one is employed in the industry. These skills are reported under two broad headings:

- "For Everyone" reports themes that are essential no matter what the job, no matter what the level of responsibility
- "For Managers/Supervisors/Operators" reports themes that are key to a senior level of responsibility, no matter what the sector

For Everyone

The tourism industry is an industry where one must work with people – colleagues, customers, suppliers. Frequently, work is shift work and can occur with little or no supervision. The key skills identified reflect the nature of the work:

- Attitude: How to get and keep a positive attitude
  - Defined as highly motivated, shows initiative, able to work independently
- Customer Service
  - Handling complaints
  - Selling Skills
  - Effectively maximizing customer contacts
- Communication/interpersonal skills
  - Listening effectively, dealing with difficult people, managing conflict
- Decision-Making/Problem Solving
- Organization/Time-Management
- Stress Management

For Managers/Supervisors/Operators

A number of the skills identified for tourism industry workers at a senior level of responsibility reflect the makeup of the industry – small business, owner operated, where only one or two individuals are responsible for all aspects of management. The skills tend to be those that would generally be provided in post-secondary management programs, but which many owner-operators have never had access to. They include:

- Marketing
- Financial Management/Accounting
- Technology:
  - Computers
  - Internet

Perhaps the most consistent theme of the entire study was that the human resource practices in the tourism industry of Saskatchewan are less than outstanding. Time and again, researchers heard of situations where employers failed to make their expectations clear to employees and then fired them for failure to perform. The tourism industry cannot continue with such practices – it is part of the reason that jobs in tourism are held in such poor esteem. Workplace training practices must improve so that the industry can recruit and retain quality workers. The tourism industry must develop:

- More effective workplace training. Supervisors must become familiar with:
  - employees' jobs/tasks
  - monitoring and appraising employee performance
  - giving and receiving feedback
  - motivating employees
- Training support for workplace trainers and supervisors
  - trainers and supervisors require the skills and the time to train others effectively

Delivery

Training delivery in the tourism industry has been sketchy in the past. Much of the training is delivered in the workplace, which is why the skills of trainers have been raised as such a priority. However, formal skills training has been available to a certain extent. Those in the industry, though, have complained that access has always been an issue. Training programs have been scheduled inappropriately, located inconveniently and too costly, given the low margins of owner-operated small business.

Study participants recommended the following in view of these issues:

- Offer training at various times (to accommodate shift work)
- Winter months preferred by most for training, although entry level training should be provided in the spring and early summer prior to the primary season
- Short course seminar style, maximum three days
- Geographically diverse locations in recognition of the nature of the industry
- Attempt to provide training support to isolated northern communities and tourism operations

Cost/Benefit

Perhaps one of the biggest barriers to training in the tourism industry is that of cost/benefit. Operators do not yet see a major financial benefit to training. It is viewed as an expense rather than as an investment. Most operations have low margins in the tourism industry. Anything viewed as an expense that will cut into the size of the margin must be seen by operators to have a bottom line benefit. When study participants were asked who should pay for training, there was a mixed response. Employers, worried about high levels of turn over, frequently thought employees should bear the cost of training. Employees, who frequently are not compensated for training through any salary incentives, often feel that employers should pay for training. A number of employers in Saskatchewan are beginning to look at innovative ways of sharing and partnering with their employees on the cost of training. This has to be considered by more employers as a priority.

At the same time, those offering and delivering training to the tourism industry must keep in mind:

- Programs must be low-cost/high value in order for industry to pay for them
- Cost/benefit analysis should be done on training investments to assist operators in making their decisions

Sector Specific Themes

All of the themes outlined above apply to each of the sectors examined. However each sector had specific issues of its own that require attention in order to see sustained growth.

Aboriginal Tourism

As noted earlier, Aboriginal tourism is a key plank in Tourism Saskatchewan's marketing endeavours. Aboriginal cultural product and experience is sought by visitors from across the world. Culture camps, cultural/historical museums, and art forms all play a role in the cultural tourism experience. In addition, Aboriginal operators are active in a variety of other enterprises including casinos, hotels, restaurants and so on. This study examined issues faced by the this area of tourism and, to a certain extent, by Aboriginal workers in other sectors. The research in this area is very preliminary and one of the primary recommendations is that more extensive needs assessment be conducted.

Aboriginal tourism is characterized by a population that has long been marginalized. The rates of education and employment are significantly lower among Aboriginal people than among the general population (FSIN, 1997). Many of the issues identified are related to a low level of experience with work in general and to the sharing of a culture with others.

Aboriginal Tourism Recommendations

1. Further develop opportunities for pre-employment training of Aboriginal peoples so that work-place expectations can be better understood prior to entering the workforce, thereby contributing to more success in first-time employment. An example of training of this sort is the STEC Tourism Careers for Youth program, which offers life skills and workplace skill training along with a period of mentorship.

2. Develop and offer training to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employers of Aboriginal peoples that will sensitize them to the cultural traditions that have an impact on employment. Through this training, encourage employers to develop culturally sensitive employment policies and practices in consideration, in particular, of the strong ties to family in many Aboriginal cultures. This is not to suggest that Aboriginal employees do not need to meet the requirements of the workplace. It is simply to suggest that employers and employees negotiate appropriate policies that will both allow the business/organization to be successful and the cultural needs of employees to be met.

3. Provide ongoing and appropriate pre-employment and professional development training to Aboriginal tourism employees in the cultural traditions, heritage, and political history of First Nations and Metis peoples. This may include experience of sacred ceremonies, and exposure to the wisdom of Elders. Ensure, above all, that individuals are well-informed of and committed to the Indigenous Peoples' Ethical Guidelines for Aboriginal Tourism (Walkingbear, 1999), currently being developed by leaders in Aboriginal tourism in consultation with Elders and Elders' helpers (Oskahpeyos).

4. Provide new employees to the Aboriginal tourism work force with customer service/host training that is consistent with cultural traditions and yet provides them with the skills to effectively deal with customers, particularly in difficult situations.

5. Continue the adaptation of training tools and materials to an Aboriginal tourism context to ensure their relevance, validity, and utility to Aboriginal employees and work places.

6. Work with human resource and business training programs to develop programming for managers and human resource personnel that will allow them to accurately assess the training needs of their employees and provide individualized training and support programs that are sensitive to culture and Indigenous traditions. These programs should be included as part of all post-secondary management and human resource training, as well as being available as professional development opportunities outside the formal education system.

7. Provide workplace supervisors with solid training in supervision and workplace training delivery to support the development of new employees in the workplace.

8. Explore the opportunity to develop apprenticeship-style business skills training for Aboriginal people. The traditional apprenticeship model offers work place training for 80% of the year and technical skills training for 20% of the year. Traditionally, the employer continues to pay the salary of the employee while they are in training, but the training itself is offered at little or no cost to either the employer or the employee.

9. All future development of Aboriginal tourism and tourism training must be founded upon the Ethical Guidelines in respect of the advice of the elders and their helpers.

10. Further study into the training needs of workers in the Aboriginal tourism sector should be conducted, including accurate projections of tourism development and employment, in-depth analysis of specific skill requirements, and assessment of appropriate delivery mechanisms. This research, as always, must at minimum be conducted in consultation with Aboriginal leaders, and ideally be led by them.

Accommodation

The accommodation sector includes hotels and motels as well as bed and breakfasts, campgrounds, hostels and so on. The sector is one of the largest and most important employers is the tourism industry and is a key part of the industry infrastructure. While visitors may not travel to a destination to visit a hotel, they do require accommodation once they arrive. Hotel employees have also been found to be key sources of information for tourism visitors. Many times, they will get their visitor information from a hotel employee rather than from the local visitor information office. Thus, the employees in this sector play important roles in the overall success of the tourism industry. The major themes that emerged in this sector are completely consistent with the themes outlined for the tourism industry as a whole.

Accommodation Recommendations

1) Continue to provide "soft-skills" training opportunities, and provide employers with information about how these skills *can* be learned, in the workplace, through the modelling and reinforcing of appropriate behaviours.

2) Work with high school educators to identify those students interested in pursuing careers in the tourism industry, alert those students to the types of qualities employers are looking for, and provide them with opportunities to develop skills valued by those employers.

3) Help employers develop systematic orientation procedures. Moving beyond describing duties for the new recruits, orientation would include an outline of organizational values, and provide examples of behaviours that reflect those values. Then, encourage employers to reward those kinds of behaviours appropriately.

4) Along with their list of duties or house policies, employers should be encouraged to provide new employees with a *rationale* for their tasks -- why those tasks are important to the overall functioning of the department and/or other departments. Having a better understanding of their own tasks and how their role ties into others in the establishment will enable employees to work more independently (an outcome valued by both employers and employees).

5) Encourage employers to expand their job-shadowing procedures to include a mentoring system. As always, employers will be encouraged to strategically choose a senior employee (i.e., "mentor") who will model the kinds of behaviours and attitudes they value, and to support this employee's involvement in a train-the-trainer session. This mentor can be available for post-training follow-up to answer questions and provide the new recruit with informal feedback about their performance (opportunities for formal feedback are discussed in Recommendation 9).

6) To improve communication between departments, focus group participants suggested cross-training and monthly staff meetings. Cross-training would increase employees' understanding of the interdependence of departments and the need for team work. Monthly staff meetings would facilitate communication between departments and reinforce the notion that all departments are working toward a common goal: providing exceptional customer service. These meetings could also serve as opportunities to have brainstorming sessions (recognizing employees as a valuable resource for decision making and problem solving).

7) Time management courses should be made available to employers/supervisors/managers, covering such topics as setting priorities and delegating responsibility. Giving employees more information and authority to make decisions will foster their independence and feelings of competence, while decreasing supervisors' work and stress load[1]. The tourism industry also needs to provide support for its managers, to avoid losing these valuable members of the industry to burn-out. Providing such support may make supervisory positions more attractive to those who would otherwise avoid such intrinsically stressful roles.

8) Work with owners and operators to develop orientation and cross-training programs specifically for managers, particularly those who are new to a particular establishment. All new supervisors should also be provided with training in general leadership skills (e.g., setting goals and motivating others) and giving performance feedback.

9) Work with employers to develop a performance review system. This system would be used jointly by the employer and employee to identify performance strengths and areas needing further development. This system would be a user-friendly tool for employee feedback, goal setting, and development plans.

10) Provide supervisors and front-line employees with opportunities to develop those skills considered important in the following areas: personal management, communication/peo-ple skills, customer service (many of which tie into communication skills), and other general skills outlined in the Training Needs results section. Continue to provide and promote the "additional" types of training (e.g., *Saskatchewan Best* tourism customer service training).

11) Industry trainers should work with employers and employees to ensure the content and presentation of materials are most relevant to their needs (i.e., will make the best use of their valuable training time). This collaborative effort will work to minimize the training time required, while maximizing the efficiency of tourism training programs.

12) Tackling the problem of training *costs* as a potential barrier may involve a number of strategies. The tourism industry needs to do all it can to minimize the costs of training courses and materials. STEC should work with relevant industry associations to establish funding sources and strategies (e.g., government subsidies) to alleviate the burden placed on employers and employees. Creative cost-sharing arrangements between employers and employees should be generated and shared throughout the industry. Finally, a cost-benefit analysis should be conducted to establish the benefits of a trained tourism workforce (and/or the potential costs of NOT training this workforce). This research might support an important shift from training dollars being seen as *costs*, to being seen as an *investment* that readily translates to an organization's "bottom line."

13) The planning of training events should include consideration of employees' external demands (e.g., by offering training during regular shifts, or providing day care during training sessions).

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[1] Increased employee responsibility should, of course, be paired with increased employee rewards.

14) STEC and other industry trainers should coordinate their efforts in promoting and marketing available training opportunities, generating creative ways to reach employees directly (i.e., not just through their employers). For example, contacting an employee representative in each establishment (perhaps someone who has gone through STEC's certification program) who would be willing to spread the word (e.g., post a notice in their staff room) about upcoming training events.

15) Work with employers to increase their understanding of the potential benefits of employee training to their organization (see Recommendation 12). Encourage these employers to find ways to support and reward those employees willing to seek training opportunities (recognition does not have to be in the form of higher wages if that is just not feasible).

16) Partnering between STEC and SIAST to avoid the duplication of services, and to ensure that tourism training is delivered in ways that best meet the needs of the industry.

17) Because on-the-job training is an integral part of the tourism industry, STEC should continue to adapt effective training resources and strategies to be user-friendly – enabling employers and senior employees to use these tools in their own workplaces.

18) Work with employers to implement "training forums" involving experienced staff members sharing their own work experiences (e.g., how they handled difficult situations, what worked well in that situation, what did not work well ...). These training forums could be part of the organization's orientation program (see Recommendation 3) or could be incorporated into regular staff meetings (see Recommendation 6).

19) The tourism industry should continue to develop self-directed training materials including: written materials; videos providing skills-demonstrations; role-plays; and discussion questions. These materials should be more widely promoted -- employers could be encouraged to make these materials available in a "resource room" for their employees. These learning materials could be invaluable to those employees whose shifts do not allow participation in regular training seminars. These employees could be given time within their regular shift to review learning materials, and the opportunity to complete a skills-test or quiz to test their comprehension and retention of the new information. These materials could also be used to select relevant topics for the "training forums" suggested in Recommendation 18.

20) Offer training programs that will accommodate employers' and employees' schedules. The best times for training programs seem to be: the winter months (January, February or March); during the week (Mondays, Tuesdays or Wednesdays); and in the afternoon. Longer training courses should be offered two or three days in a row.

Adventure Tourism and Recreation

Adventure Tourism and Recreation is perhaps the most important growth sector in Saskatchewan's tourism industry. This is exemplified in the slogan of Tourism Saskatchewan, *"Saskatchewan, Naturally."* Included in the sector are fishing and hunting, camping, eco-adventure, agri-tourism and any other outdoor experience. The sector is facing significant change in response to market forces. Tourism visitors tend to be better educated and more demanding today than they were only a few years ago, and this change is only expected to strengthen (LeBlanc, 1998). Thus, consumers are demanding a greater level of interpretation and education tied into their adventure experiences. Even fishing and hunting outfitters recognize the need to develop interpretive skills to meet changing consumer demands. As well, advanced outdoor technologies such as Global Positioning Sensors and Satellite Communication require that workers in the industry receive continuous upgrading and development to ensure safe outdoor experiences.

Adventure Tourism and Recreation Recommendations

1. Work with high school educators to ensure that individuals who are interested in pursuing careers in the tourism industry are identified early and provided with opportunities to develop key skills required for entry into the industry including communication skills, problem solving skills and organizational skills.

2. Develop and/or identify simple, easy to use self-administered tools that will allow individuals working in the tourism industry to accurately measure their skills in priority areas such as customer service, communication, organization, and problem solving. The tools should be specific enough that they are able to identify gaps and strengths in skills to facilitate the development of a training strategy.

3. Continue the Saskatchewan Outfitters' Association guide training program in some form to allow for the development of new competent guides and alleviate skill shortages.

4. Explore the feasibility of establishing a team of industry trainers skilled in delivering training in entry level customer service, communication skills, organizational skills, problem solving skills, guiding skills and interpretation skills who could travel to isolated outposts for pre-season training sessions in approximately one week cycles.

5. In consultation with tourism industry marketing specialists, STEC should identify topic areas within the subjects of marketing and selling that are common to all subsectors (i.e. outfitting, ecotourism and agri-tourism) and topic areas that are specific to each subsector. Careful identification of common marketing topics would maximize collective opportunities for skill development, while recognition of those areas where cross-over is not realistic will minimize time in irrelevant training for operators and employees.

6. Training programs in the areas of selling and marketing skills must be designed and delivered recognizing the needs of specific sub-groups and the varying levels of expertise.

7. Provide diverse opportunities to develop interpretational skills, recognizing the different levels of expertise of potential participants, as well as the variety of venues in which interpretation will be offered.

8. Partner with regional colleges to develop and deliver small business accounting training to the tourism workforce, including the use of computerized accounting packages, targeting most specifically small business owner/operators. Where possible, tie programs in accounting and bookkeeping into the overall practice of business planning and development.

9. Investigate the feasibility of providing Train-the-Trainer programs to employers and senior employees from isolated sites. Ensure also that members of the Adventure Tourism sector are aware of Train-the-Trainer opportunities when they become available.

10. Explore and identify opportunities for the Adventure Tourism work force to develop their technological skills, beginning with computer and internet skills, which are key to business success in today's tourism markets.

11. Work with the relevant industry associations to develop and deliver short workshops on such sector specific technology as global positioning sensors, advanced communication systems, and sophisticated fish finding equipment. Partnerships with equipment manufacturers and distributors, who have expertise and experience with the technology, would likely facilitate this objective.

12. Design training programs for the Adventure Tourism and Recreation sector that recognize the sector's limitations. Programs should be delivered in two to four day stretches and be offered in geographically diverse locations to ensure greatest access. Programs should be scheduled during the winter months, preferably during January and February. Programs should also be scheduled during the week (not on weekends) and during the day (not in the evening).

13. Develop a strategic planning committee among the primary delivery agencies for skills required in the tourism workforce. Membership on the committee should include SIAST, STEC, regional colleges, Aboriginal training providers, universities and the relevant tourism industry associations. Effort should be made to ensure that the appropriate organization/delivery agency is delivering training and that delivery is implemented in ways that meet the needs of the industry.

14. Develop support systems for employers and owner/operators so that on-the-job training can be effectively delivered, reducing the learning period for new employees and reducing the trial and error nature of skill development. Such innovations as access to site trainers who periodically visit work sites and Train-the-Trainer opportunities are critical. As well, the continued development of curricula that can be delivered by employers, as was modeled by the Saskatchewan Outfitters' Association guide training program, will be useful supports.

15. STEC should work with the relevant industry associations to establish mechanisms and strategies so that training needs can be met and costs can be covered in ways that do not create hardship for either employers or employees.

Attractions

Attractions represent those things (other than scenery) that draw visitors to a destination. They include such amenities as parks, museums, amusement parks, casinos, shopping malls and so on. Many of the attractions in this sector cross over with other sectors. For example, provincial parks were examined in the Adventure Tourism Sector and festivals were studied in the Events and Conferences Sector. When one teases out the part of the Attractions Sector that does not cross over to other sectors, one is left with museums. Saskatchewan has a large network of museums stretched out across the small rural communities of the province, in addition to larger ones located in urban centers. In 1998, the cultural sector conducted a training needs assessment which included an examination of the training needs of those working in and operating museums. Rather than redo the work of this study, we have chosen to simply cite the themes related to museums from this work.

Attractions Sector Themes

1. Specialized training in archival collection, conservation and exhibition, historical research and writing, interpretation

2. General training in administration and community development, fostering the ability to extend museums beyond the confines of the building so that they are relevant to local communities.

3. Facility management and development

4. Volunteer management

5. Fund Raising

Events and Conferences

The events and conferences sector falls into two general streams as is suggested by the sector name. Events include everything from cultural festivals to sporting events to trade shows to family reunions. Conferences are generally tied in to the location within which they are held and this study focused on event coordination within the context of a hosting facility for this stream. Events coordinators and managers tend to operate at a fairly sophisticated level across both streams. Strong management skills were evident. The events stream was characterized by high levels of volunteerism and this appeared to be the primary path into the occupation, as well as the main training ground. For hosting facilities, those in the field tended to work their way up through a successive series of jobs, each with increased levels of responsibility. Key skills in the events stream were volunteer management and risk management. Key to the facilities stream was sophisticated food and wine knowledge. In both streams, strong communication skills, including proposal writing and public presentations were considered essential.

Events and Conferences Recommendations

1. STEC, in partnership with the Provincial Apprenticeship system, explore the development of a formal apprenticeship program in Events Coordination.

2. STEC work to establish partnerships with events organizations and networks to provide professional development opportunities to events professionals in the province.

3. STEC develop resources that would be useful for events professionals including books and videos on marketing and sales, and magazines that track food and wine trends.

4. STEC utilize its internet information systems to both inform events professionals about training resources and opportunities and provide them with the opportunity to exchange information in a collegial fashion.

Food and Beverage Sector

The Food and Beverage sector is the largest employer in the tourism industry and is the fastest growing in the country. In fact, the Food and Beverage sector alone accounts for 80% of employment growth in the tourism industry (Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council, 1997). Some of the employment in this sector occurs within the context of accommodation -- hotel properties that also have restaurant and/or banquet services. However, there are also a great number of food and beverage operations that function outside the traditional "tourism business". These businesses also provide high levels of tourism related employment. These include elegant dining establishments, ethnic restaurants, fast food providers, restaurant chains, and independent owner/operated outlets including taverns and nightclubs. The major themes that emerged in this sector are completely consistent with the themes outlined for the tourism industry as a whole.

Food and Beverage Recommendations

1. Continue to provide "soft-skills" training opportunities, and provide employers with information about how these skills *can* be learned, in the workplace, through the modeling and reinforcing of appropriate behaviours.

2. Work with high school educators to identify those students interested in pursuing careers in the tourism industry, alert those students to the types of qualities employers are looking for, and provide them with opportunities to develop basic employability skills (e.g., practical numeracy skills, communication skills).

3. Help employers develop systematic orientation procedures. Moving beyond describing duties for the new recruits, orientation would include an outline of organizational values, and provide examples of behaviours that reflect those values. Then, encourage employers to reward those kinds of behaviours appropriately.

4. Encourage employers to expand their job-shadowing procedures to include a mentoring system. As always, employers will be encouraged to strategically choose a senior employee (i.e., "mentor") who will model the kinds of behaviours and attitudes they value, and to support this employee's involvement in a train-the-trainer session. This mentor can be available for post-training follow-up to answer questions and provide the new recruit with informal feedback about their performance (opportunities for formal feedback are discussed in Recommendation 7).

5. Continue to provide and promote train-the-trainer sessions for senior employees. Encourage employers to be strategic when planning their training sessions and support those senior employees responsible for training (e.g., maintain realistic expectations, given their added training responsibilities).

6. Work with owners and operators to develop orientation and cross-training programs specifically for managers, particularly those who are new to a particular establishment.

7. Work with employers to develop a performance review system. This system would be used jointly by the employer and employee to identify performance strengths and areas needing further development. This system would be a user-friendly tool used for employee feedback, goal setting, and development plans.

8. All new supervisors should be provided with training in general leadership skills (e.g., setting goals and motivating others) and giving performance feedback.

9. In an industry that relies on "promoting from within," it is particularly important to support those individuals who are promoted to very different roles within the organization – roles often requiring a new set of skills. Providing greater support will reduce the loss of valuable managers to "burn-out," and may make supervisory positions more attractive to employees who would otherwise avoid such intrinsically stressful roles.

10. Time management courses should be made available to employers/supervisors/managers – covering such topics as setting priorities and delegating responsibility.

11. Along with their list of duties or house policies, employers should be encouraged to provide all employees with a *rationale* for their tasks -- why those tasks are important to the overall functioning of the department and/or other departments. Having a better understanding of their own tasks and how their role ties into others in the establishment will enable employees to work more independently.

12. Provide supervisors and front-line employees with opportunities to develop those skills considered important in the following areas: personal management, communication and people skills, customer service (many of which tie into communication skills), and other general skills outlined in the Training Needs results section. Continue to provide and promote the "additional" types of training (e.g., *Saskatchewan Best* customer service training).

13. Industry trainers should work with employers and employees to ensure the content and presentation of materials are most relevant to their needs (i.e., will make the best use of their valuable training time). This collaborative effort will work to minimize the training time required, while maximizing the efficiency of tourism training programs.

14. Tackling the problem of training *costs* as a potential barrier may involve a number of strategies. The tourism industry needs to do all it can to minimize the costs of training courses and materials. STEC should work with relevant industry associations to establish funding sources and strategies (e.g., government subsidies) to alleviate the burden placed on employers and employees. Creative cost-sharing arrangements between employers and employees should be generated and shared throughout the industry. Finally, a cost-benefit analysis to establish the benefits of a trained tourism workforce (and/or the potential costs of NOT training this workforce) should be conducted. This research might support an important shift from training dollars being seen as *costs*, to being seen as an *investment* that readily translates to an organization's "bottom line."

15. STEC and other industry trainers should coordinate their efforts in promoting and marketing available training opportunities, generating creative ways to reach employees directly (i.e., not just through their employers). For example, contacting an employee representative in each establishment (perhaps someone who has gone through STEC's certification program) who would be willing to spread the word (e.g., post a notice in their staff room) about upcoming training events.

16. Work with employers to increase their understanding of the potential benefits of employee training to their organization (see Recommendation 14). Encourage employers to find ways to support and reward those employees willing to seek training opportunities (recognition does not have to be in the form of higher wages if that is just not feasible).

17. Partnering between STEC and SIAST to avoid the duplication of services, and to ensure that tourism training is delivered in ways that best meet the needs of the industry.

18. Because on-the-job training is an integral part of the tourism industry, STEC should continue to adapt effective training resources and strategies to be user-friendly – enabling employers and senior employees to use these tools in their own workplaces.

19. Consider incorporating skill-demonstrations into the certification process, either in-person or through videos.

20. Work with employers to implement "training forums" involving experienced staff members sharing their own work experiences (e.g., how they handled difficult situations, what worked well in that situation, what did not work well, etc.). These training forums could be part of the organization's orientation program (see Recommendation 3).

21. Offer training programs that will accommodate employers' and employees' schedules. The best times for training programs seem to be afternoons during the week (Mondays, Tuesdays or Wednesdays), in the winter months (January, February or March).

Tourism Services

Tourism Services sector workers provide support to the tourism industry as a whole. The sector includes industry associations, marketing organizations, visitor information centers and, peripherally, includes such services as retail and banking. Workers in the sector fall into two distinct levels of responsibility. Front-line workers tend to be workplace trained. Senior workers tend to require significant post-secondary education in such knowledge areas as marketing, research, program design, etc. The majority of the respondents to this study fell at the front-line level and the recommendations tend to reflect that bias. Issues that emerged include technology, particularly computer software, local area and provincial tourism knowledge, and communication skills (written, verbal, public speaking).

Tourism Services Recommendations

1. Results of this project offered some initial ideas as to what future training opportunities should be explored by STEC. However, this needs assessment was conducted on a small sample of individuals and within a short time frame, therefore the conclusions and recommendations should be viewed as somewhat exploratory. **STEC should continue to consult with individuals from the Tourism Services sector to determine training needs on an ongoing basis.**

2. The majority of respondents said that employees in their organization could benefit from further training indicating that there is certainly a need for further training options and opportunities. **STEC should continue to work with this sector, and training delivery agencies, to develop additional training programs.**

3. Participants did not mention a need for additional Certification or Standards programs; all suggestions were for specific skills training. **Specific skills training should be provided to employees in this sector.** The most commonly requested skills were:
    - knowledge of specific computer programs;
    - time management skills;
    - communication skills; and
    - customer service skills.

4. The Tourism Services Sector is very diverse in terms of the roles each organization plays within the sector. Many of the employees within certain areas of the sector have considerable educational and training background prior to being hired in their organization. Most respondents for whom this was the case, felt their post-secondary education prepared them well for the work they did. As such, **STEC should simply ensure that training developed for or delivered to this target group focus on such issues as tourism specific marketing skills and tourism industry knowledge.**

5. There is little formal training for employees new to an organization in the Tourism Services Sector. This gap suggests needs in two general areas:
    - There is little awareness of the kinds of tools that are available to the Tourism Services Sector that would be useful in job orientation, such as Tourism Visitor Information Counsellor Standards
    - The skills of supervisors in planning and developing job orientation and training are weak

Recommendation Number 7 addresses awareness issues. However, **STEC should work with employers and training providers to ensure the availability of and participation in Supervisory Skills and Train-the-Trainer training.**

6. **Given that many participants felt training programs are not offered at convenient times, it is recommended that STEC pay special attention to the scheduling of training programs.** Weekday sessions during the winter months, excluding December, appear to be the most preferred or convenient times.

7. A lack of awareness of training opportunities may be preventing some employees from utilizing the services. **It is recommended that training opportunities be advertised in a newsletter in order to increase awareness.**

Transportation

The Transportation Sector includes all of the ways in which visitors move around such as coach, air, train, and even taxi. The research in this sector was limited by time and qualitative data was not able to be collected. As well, 65% of the participants were taxi drivers, biasing the results to a certain extent. Themes that emerged included such issues as safety, emergency response training (CPR, First Aid, etc.) and an excessively high emphasis on supervisory skills training.

Transportation Sector Recommendations

1. Seeking input from taxi drivers, explore the possibility of a taxi host program similar to the one used in British Columbia where taxi drivers are also trained as tour guides.

2. Work with owners and operators to develop orientation and cross-training programs specifically for managers, particularly those who are new to an organization/ establishment to ensure they are familiar with their employees' roles and duties.

3. Continue to work with employers to develop, and promote the use of, performance review systems. These systems can be used jointly by the employer and employee to identify performance strengths and areas needing further development. Ideally, these performance review systems will serve as user-friendly tools that facilitate employee feedback, goal setting, and development plans.

4. Encourage owners and operators to provide all supervisors with training in general leadership skills (e.g., managing change and communicating their goals and expectations to others), and giving performance feedback. STEC's *Survival Skills for Supervisors* is one example of this type of training.

5. Provide stress management sessions to help employees and employers better manage the stress in their work environments.

6. Encourage employers to examine their own organizations, helping them find ways to support their staff (both front-line employees and supervisory personnel) and alleviate extraneous stressors that interfere with employees' abilities to function.

7. Provide training in effective problem solving techniques, encouraging employers to provide employees with opportunities to practice these new skills.

8. Continue to provide customer service training – emphasize strategies for effectively dealing with angry or difficult customers, handling customer complaints, and adapting one's own style to meet the needs of individual customers.

9. Encourage employers to include first aid and CPR in their standard orientation procedures, and let them know where they can access those training resources.

10. Further examine the issue of potential language difficulties within this sector. Find alternative ways to collect information from those employees for whom English is not their first language, to ensure that future programs are meeting their potentially unique needs.

11. Continue to provide "soft-skills" training, with a particular emphasis on communication skills. Stress the importance of conveying a clear message to others, and of being able to effectively deal with difficult people.

12. STEC and other industry trainers should co-ordinate their efforts in promoting and marketing available training opportunities, generating creative ways to reach employees directly (i.e., not just through their employers). For example, contacting an employee representative in each establishment (perhaps someone who has gone through STEC's certification program) who would be willing to spread the word (e.g., post a notice in their staff room) about upcoming training events.

13. STEC should work with relevant industry associations to establish funding sources and strategies (e.g., government subsidies) to alleviate the burden placed on employers and employees.

14. Creative cost-sharing arrangements between employers and employees should be generated and shared throughout the industry.

15. A cost-benefit analysis should be conducted to establish the benefits of a trained tourism workforce (and/or the potential costs of NOT training this workforce). This research might support an important shift from training dollars being seen as *costs*, to being seen as an *investment* that readily translates to an organization's "bottom line."

16. Because on-the-job training is an integral part of the tourism industry, STEC should continue to adapt effective training resources and strategies to be user-friendly – enabling employers and senior employees to use these tools in their own workplaces.

17. Partner with those providing in-house training programs in this industry – determine whether STEC can provide them with additional information or resources.

18. Because training manuals are a common training tool, and because such written materials are important resources for employee learning, STEC could assist employers in the development of clear and effective training manuals.

19. Continue to provide employers with training resources in the form of written materials and videos – encourage owners and operators to develop their own resource library so that these materials could be signed out at employees' convenience.

20. Work with employers to implement "training forums" involving experienced staff members sharing their own work experiences (e.g., how they handled difficult situations, what worked well in that situation, what did not work well, etc.).

21. Offer training programs that will accommodate employers' and employees' schedules. The best times for training programs seem to be evenings during the week (Mondays, Tuesdays or Wednesdays) during the summer months (June, July and August).

Travel Trade

Consumers purchase holidays and travel from the retail travel. The Saskatchewan study was simply a validation of a 1997 national study. This is another sector where huge change is taking place. Travelers are now able to access travel packages and tickets over the internet and the role of the agency is becoming less and less clear. Forward thinking agencies are working to change the way they do business in response to market trends – it has become a matter of survival for them. To be successful, agencies must develop such skills as packaging and promotion. Travel counsellors must develop the skills to work as consultants, offering businesses and leisure travelers expert advice and solid value for money. Some agencies recommended diversifying services to promote inbound travel (e.g. meeting planning). The national study identified a number of recommendations related to formal education in the field. In Saskatchewan, there is only one private vocational school providing accredited travel counsellor training and some of the recommendations are therefore not relevant.

Travel Trade Recommendations

1. The CTHRC should conduct a survey of existing training resources in order to determine what skills and knowledge requirements are currently addressed in programs for travel counsellors and students. The results should be compared to the skill requirements identified in this study. The CTHRC, together with other key stakeholders, should then develop the training resources that fill the gaps.

2. The research community should endeavour to develop a measurement of the return on investment in training for the industry, in order to provide concise measures of the benefits of providing skills training to employees. While there is a general agreement that "training is good," there remains a reluctance among some employers to invest resources in providing training to employees.

3. Business partners should be encouraged to provide training in those areas where needs have been identified, and promote the certification of their employees in order to raise the degree of professionalism in the industry.

4. Steering committee members should disseminate the research results to key industry stakeholders. This communications campaign should be spearheaded by the CTHRC.

5. Industry partners should be made aware of the existence of essential skills profiles and occupational standards for retail travel industry positions (when available) and should be encouraged to make use of these profiles and standards in their human resource planning.

6. A forum should be created to bring together industry representatives and educators to discuss current partnership arrangements and exchange information on current trends in the industry and their impact on the future skill requirements and curriculum development. The forum would provide an opportunity for educators and employers to discuss which types of partnerships are the most effective in the on-going development of travel programs. As well, partners could discuss innovative ways to ensure that future graduates have the skills needed to work in the industry. While individual educational institutions have developed steering committees of industry representatives, there does not seem to exist any formalized structure that brings together these institutions to discuss best practices.

Next Steps

This study was developed and implemented through STEC, not only to provide STEC with information about tourism industry training priorities, but also to provide training providers across the province with insight into tourism industry needs. There is no expectation that STEC will, alone, be able to meet the significant training demands of this quickly growing industry.

The study identifies numerous recommendations. For some, implementation strategies will be inherent to the recommendation. For others, strategies will need to be developed so that the recommendations can be achieved. These strategies must be developed through ongoing consultation with the tourism industry, both employers and employees, using the network of industry and sector associations, regional tourism organizations, and STEC.

Priorities for action should be consistent with the overall marketing and product development initiatives of the tourism industry in Saskatchewan, particularly in those areas classified by Tourism Saskatchewan as "emerging products." Emerging products are defined in the Vision and Ends Statements of Tourism Saskatchewan (Tourism Saskatchewan, 1999). The most relevant aspects of those definitions, from the perspective of training needs, include the following:

a) where product and/or infrastructure is non-existent or in the early stages of development
b) which have markets that are clearly identifiable and have the potential for growth
c) which have opportunities for developing a competitive sustainable position in the target markets
d) which have opportunities for providing satisfactory rates of return on investment

Human Resource development and training are, in a labor intensive industry like tourism, a key component of any product development initiative. It is reasonable therefore, to prioritize those sectors of tourism that are the least well developed and that have the most potential for growth and return on investment. According to the marketing plans of Tourism Saskatchewan, the three priorities for market development are:

- Eco/Adventure Tourism
- Agricultural Tourism
- Aboriginal Tourism

Thus, the recommendations of two sections of this report must be established as training and development priorities:

- Aboriginal Tourism
  - First and foremost among the recommendations in this report is the need for further investigation into training needs led by Aboriginal people.
- Adventure Tourism and Recreation
  - The priorities from this report must be those that relate most closely to the three marketing priorities for the tourism industry.

Beyond this, priorities should be identified by the advisory committee established to supervise this research. ***First among these priorities must be a strategy to distribute the information gathered through the needs assessment to educational and training institutions, regional colleges, private vocational schools, private trainers, industry and sector associations and so on.*** The tourism industry's interest is best

served by informing training providers of the needs and ensuring that those needs are acted upon, a role STEC has agreed it should play as the coordinating body for human resource development in the tourism industry of Saskatchewan.

Continuing Partnerships

Over time, STEC has emerged as the coordinating body for human resource development in Saskatchewan's tourism industry – a role that has been given to it by the industry. Indeed, STEC has already begun to act on many of the recommendations identified in this report – both as a direct consequence of the report and as a result of its ongoing contact with the tourism industry. STEC's role, by definition implies numerous partnerships on the delivery side. There are two general partnership areas that require ongoing consideration to ensure the continuing ability to meet the considerable training need:

- Partnership with training providers
  - to ensure that training for the tourism industry is appropriate and effectively delivered
  - to develop and maintain portability for training, including prior learning assessment and recognition and articulation of industry based training with more formal education
- Partnership with Western and National tourism human resource organizations (e.g. Tourism Standards Consortium of Western Canada; Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council)
  - to ensure the ongoing availability of relevant standards and training support materials.
  - to ensure that, now that Saskatchewan's training needs have been clearly identified, this province's priorities will be addressed at the Western and National levels.

Saskatchewan now has a significant resource with which to build a training strategy for the tourism industry. Given the projected level of growth in this industry and the need identified by those working in it, STEC and its partner training providers have set for themselves an enormous task. The groundwork has been laid; expectations have been raised; the real work must now begin.

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For more information on specific sector studies, contact STEC, below.

Your Professional Advantage
STEC
SASKATCHEWAN TOURISM EDUCATION COUNCIL
A Division of Tourism Saskatchewan

101 - 230 22nd Street East
Saskatoon SK S7K 0E9
Phone: (306) 933-5900
Fax: (306) 933-6250